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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 000600

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2013

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR IT IRAQI FREEDOM

SUBJECT: ITALIAN MINDEF MARTINO PROVIDES ASSURANCES ON FLOW OF FORCES

REF: A. ROME 0572

1B. STATE 40983
1C. MRG 1000823Z FEB 03
1D. ROME 0292
1E. ROME 331

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR MEL SEMBLER FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

PLEASE SEE ACTION REQUESTS IN PARAS 9 AND 10.

11. (S) SUMMARY. ITALIAN MINDEF MARTINO TOLD THE AMBASSADOR ON FEBRUARY 12 THAT THE GOI WOULD NOT LET THE U.S. DOWN ON FLOW OF FORCES AND OTHER USG LOGISTICAL REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO POSSIBLE MILITARY ACTION IN IRAQ. PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI IS COMMITTED TO MEETING ITALY'S RESPONSIBILITIES (NOTE: REF B WILL BE A TEST OF THIS COMMITMENT). MARTINO SAID THE GOI UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF FORCE PROTECTION AND WILL DECIDE SOON ON WHAT ITALY CAN DO WITH ITS OWN FORCES TO ASSIST. MARTINO ADMITTED THAT THE GOI HAD SET THE BAR TOO LOW IN TAKING CERTAIN U.S. REQUESTS TO PARLIAMENT AND SAID HE MAY BE ABLE TO RAISE THE THRESHOLD. REVERSING COURSE, THE MINDEF SAID HE WAS WILLING TO RECONSIDER THE USE OF ITALIAN CIVILIAN AIRPORTS FOR U.S. CIVAIR TRANSPORT OF MILITARY PERSONNEL "IF IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE USG." ASKED BY MARTINO IF IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DELAY UPGRADES TO THE NAVAL BASE IN LA MADDALENA, SARDINIA, THE AMBASSADOR underscored THAT U.S. PERSONNEL MERIT IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR SUBSTANDARD FACILITIES. ON PRISONER TREATMENT IN AFGHANISTAN, MARTINO FAVORS HANDING DETAINEES CAPTURED BY ITALIAN UNITS DURING JOINT U.S.-ITALY OPERATIONS OVER TO AMERICAN FORCES. THE GOI IS SEEKING U.S. INPUT ON WHAT TO TELL THE RED CROSS AND WHETHER IT SHOULD APPROACH THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT ABOUT A STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT (SOFA). END SUMMARY.

FLOW OF FORCES

12. (S) THE AMBASSADOR AND POL-MIN COUNSELOR ON FEBRUARY 12 DISCUSSED FLOW OF FORCES AND FORCE PROTECTION ISSUES WITH MINDEF MARTINO AND MOD DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TRUPIANO. MARTINO OPENED THE MEETING BY SAYING THAT HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE APPROVAL THE GOI HAD GIVEN THE PREVIOUS EVENING FOR U.S. RAIL TRANSPORT OF MATERIEL THROUGH ITALY REQUESTED BY EUCOM ON FEBRUARY 6. HE HAD DISCUSSED THE ISSUE PERSONALLY WITH PM BERLUSCONI, WHO HAD GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT. THE GOI'S SUPPORT WAS APPRECIATED, THE AMBASSADOR SAID, BUT IT WAS NOW UNLIKELY THE SPECIFIC SHIPMENT WOULD BE TRANSITING ITALY BECAUSE OF AUSTRIAN OPPOSITION.

13. (S) THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED TO MARTINO THAT THE USG NEEDS CLARITY ON WHAT IT CAN EXPECT WITH REGARD TO TIMELY TRANSIT, BASE ACCESS, AND OVERFLIGHT. "I HAVE TOLD WASHINGTON REPEATEDLY THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A PROBLEM," THE AMBASSADOR STATED. MARTINO AFFIRMED THAT THE GOI WILL LIVE UP TO ITS PROMISES, ADDING THAT BERLUSCONI HAD TOLD HIM, "ITALY WILL ACT AS A GOOD ALLY SHOULD." HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOI HAD MADE A MISTAKE IN EARLY JANUARY WHEN IT INFORMED PARLIAMENT OF PLANNED F16 OVERFLIGHTS BECAUSE THIS HAD SET THE BAR TOO LOW. ASKED IF IT WAS POSSIBLE TO WALK BACK THE NEED TO INFORM PARLIAMENT ABOUT FLOW OF FORCES DETAILS, MARTINO SAID HE THOUGHT SOMETHING COULD BE ACHIEVED. FOR EXAMPLE, HE NOTED, WE WOULD NOT NEED TO TELL THE PARLIAMENT IMMEDIATELY ABOUT DETAILING A LIAISON OFFICER TO TAMPA FOR IRAQ-RELATED OPERATIONS (REF A). THE MINDEF WAS TOLD THAT THE TIMING ISSUE WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT AS OUR REQUESTS ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE RAPID AND FREQUENT OVER THE COMING WEEKS. MARTINO SAID HE WAS "TRANQUIL" BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER IS COMMITTED TO MEETING ITALY'S RESPONSIBILITIES. (NOTE: THIS MEETING OCCURRED BEFORE RECEIPT OF REF B, WHICH WILL SERVE AS A SPECIFIC MEASURE OF MARTINO'S GENERAL COMMITMENT.)

FORCE PROTECTION

14. (S) MARTINO AFFIRMED THAT ITALY IS PREPARED TO HELP THE U.S. FULLY MEET ITS FORCE PROTECTION NEEDS. HE WILL INFORM THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN WRITING ABOUT ITALY'S FP RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE U.S. POL-MIN COUNSELOR EXPLAINED THAT WHILE OUR REQUEST FOR A FORCE PROTECTION PLUS UP AT SIGONELLA WOULD NOT BE PARTICULARLY VISIBLE, REQUIREMENTS AT AUGUSTA BAY ARE OF A DIFFERENT ORDER. THERE, WE ARE LOOKING FOR AROUND-THE-CLOCK PROTECTION OF LARGE SHIPS NEEDED TO DEFEND THE SUEZ CANAL AND KEEP

INTERNATIONAL SEA LANES OPEN BY SMALLER, PREFERABLY U.S.,

ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	USNW-00	DOEE-00
	DATE-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EB-00	FAAE-00
	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

/003W

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O 131817Z FEB 03

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8237

INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE

COMUSNAVEUR LONDON UK IMMEDIATE

HQ EUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE

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